

THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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March 2007

The Editor's Den

Calendar of Events

June 9, 2007 – The GCHS has been asked to help in the Nerodeo at Lake Erie. See details below.

June 14, 2007 – **(Note that this is not the first Wednesday! It replaces the June 6th meeting)**

Special Meeting featuring Joe Collins speaking on.

July 11, 2007 **(Note that this is not the first Wednesday!)** – Monthly Meeting featuring Will Bird and Phil Peak speaking on Snake conservation in Kentucky.

August 1, 2007 – Monthly Meeting featuring Dan Meakin, DVM, speaking on snake anatomy.

Nerodeo

Several months ago, Kristen Stanford spoke to the GCHS about efforts to conserve the Lake Erie Water Snake (LEWS). Part of this effort involves an annual “Nerodeo” where as many LEWS are captured as possible to obtain data. Another part of the event will be dedicated to education programs for local children. The GCHS has been asked to help with both portions of this year’s event. It will be held on June 9th. It will probably be best to arrive the night before given the long drive involved! We need to have a list of those that will be attending by May 31. Please contact Grady Calhoun at 513-564-6041 if you plan to attend. You will be responsible for making your own lodging arrangements. There is a group from NOAH camping at South Bass Island and Hotels are available on Put-In-Bay (www.put-in-bay.com). Once we have a list of who is going we will share that so that carpooling etc can be arranged.

Thanks

Pat McMullen, brother of long-time GCHS member Mike McMullen and executive of the United Pet Group donated a bunch of aquarium supplies and equipment to the GCHS. The United Pet Group owns

many of the companies that make the aquarium supplies that we use. These include Tetra, Marineland, Perfecto, 8 in 1, Instant Ocean, Firstrax, and Jungle Labs. The donated equipment includes brand new high quality aquarium heaters, motorized filters, air pumps, fish food and more. We will be making these available to GCHS members at approximately 1/3 of the best retail price I could find. The funds raised from this sale will be used to off-set some of our operational costs. Don’t miss the June meeting as I am sure that this equipment will go quickly.

Thanks again for this very generous donation.

Anti St. Patrick's Day Activities

On St. Patrick’s day close to 20 GCHS members participated in some work to improve habitat for the Eastern Massasauga in an Ohio Park. There was also a contingent who completed some trail maintenance. It was snowing when we arrived so needless to say we didn’t have to worry about being surprised by a rattler. The majority of our effort was spent clearing brush and small trees from an area that had become unusable for the Massasaugas. The increased vegetation limits the amount of sun that gets to the ground where the snakes can bask. It was hard labor. We hacked down hundreds of trees and made some pretty impressive brush piles. Hopefully we will be able to appreciate the fruits of our labor this summer when the snakes are using the areas we cleared. Believe it or not it was actually fun and the GCHS completed some very valuable conservation work for an Ohio Endangered Species. Thanks to all who participated!

Update on Massasauga Habitat Work

Almost instant results! Last weekend an Ohio Naturalist checked out the area where the GCHS cleared brush in hope of benefiting Massasauga populations. Massasaugas were found in an area where they hadn’t been observed in more than 10 years! In addition, Kirtland’s Snakes were observed in the area as well. Kirtland’s Snakes hadn’t been observed in about 20 years. Some may ask if the snakes were

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already there but couldn't be seen because of the dense brush that we removed. My answer is, "Probably not." Except for escaping the heat of the summer it is very unlikely that the animals would have been in this area due to the low levels of sunlight which could penetrate the brush that we removed. The most likely scenario is that the Massasaugas were nearby and moved into what is now suitable habitat. More suitable habitat increases the chances for survival and even increased populations. This was one day of very hard work that yielded real, observable, quick results. Needless to say everyone involved should be proud of this good work and excited about helping, even in a small way, the survival of this species.

Finicky Mandarin Rat Snakes

by Grady Calhoun

I picked up a trio of Mandarin Rat Snakes over the passed 6 months or so and have found that they are not quite the cake-walk I had hoped for. Although I knew that they had some special needs such as lower temperatures and higher humidity, I didn't really expect their apparent lack of appetite. Of course, every one else in the world may have a different experience, but I have found that the Mandarins eat much less frequently than any of the other rat snakes I have kept throughout the years. Unlike the typical corn snakes or Pantherophis (God, I can't believe I actually used that term!) rat snakes, my mandarins are far from eating machines. They rarely accept food every week and often times go three or four weeks between meals! I still haven't accepted this as "normal" behavior. It causes me to waste a lot of rodents due to offering food twice a week or so. Sometimes they'll accept frozen thawed at one feeding but not eat again unless I offer fresh killed mice or live pinkies. They are beautiful snakes and well worth the effort, but the effort involved is significantly greater than what I had bargained for. I assume that this is why these critters have maintained their rather "pricey" status.

Don't Guess

By Grady Calhoun

We have all probably been asked to diagnose reptile problems for individuals without seeing the animals. I will typically go through a set of questions to try to identify any of the common problems we often see.

The questions I ask include:

1. Is the animal eating?

2. Is the temperature adequate?

3. Is the humidity adequate?

All too often the answer I get is "I think so." Its really hard to provide any meaningful advice with that response. I have learned that using all of the tools that are out there will help individual pet owners take better care of their animals. Measuring the temperature and humidity is relatively simple. There are a bunch of cheap thermometer/hygrometers readily available - many under \$10. The key to measuring temperature and humidity is that it needs to be measured at the level where the animals typical spend most of their time. I have seen many cages with the "stick-on" type thermometers and hygrometers located on eth back wall of the tank near the top. While this may give a reasonable estimate for a glass-climbing lizard, it is nearly worthless for a snake, tortoise, or ground dwelling lizard. As far as the "Is the animal eating?" question goes...With rodent-eating animals it is fairly easy to know if your animals are eating. It can get a little trickier with insectivores or vegetarians. Unless you have the time to actually watch the animals eat, it is unlikely that you will have an accurate indication of whether or not the animals are eating, or at least eating enough. My recommendation is to use a small digital scale. I first started using these with baby tortoises. Although it seemed like the vegetation was routinely disappearing from the cage, I really didn't know if all three tortoises were eating enough. I found that one of the three was actually losing weight. I got it to a vet and found that there was a respiratory infection. I am currently routinely weighing a pair of small Uromastix I have. As with the tortoises, I found that one was not gaining weight. I kept trying different food items until I noticed that the animal was eating. I recently found out just how important this can be. A GCHS member, who shall remain nameless, told me that a recently purchased Uromastix had died. I asked what was wrong and he replied that he really wasn't sure that it was eating. Most reptiles can survive quite long without food. This typically gives the owner plenty of time to determine that the animal is not eating and make corrections IF periodic monitoring is performed.

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Classified Advertising Policy

GCHS Members may run a free classified ad of 7 lines or less at no charge for an unlimited time; however, the ad will be canceled after one month unless the editor is informed to continue it. Please include scientific names for the animals with your ad as well as your phone number and area code.

Ads of up to 7 lines for non-member are \$2 per issue; ad charges for items more than 7 lines long are as follows:

Business card size	\$3 per issue
1/4 page	\$6 per issue
2 page	\$10 per issue
Full page	\$20 per issue

The GCHS is not liable for the quality of the merchandise advertised. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.

Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked Tongue

Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 47001.

Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gradycalhoun@earthlink.net.

Black and white photographs can be included with articles. Photo submissions should include your name, phone number, and description of photo on the back. Photos can be returned.

All time dependent submissions must be in the editor's possession no later than the meeting previous to the publication.

Classifieds

Rats and Mice for sale. Reasonable price. Call Jesse or Tom (513) 876-0579.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card-carrying members of the GCHS at *All Creatures Animal Hospital*. Dr. Dan Meakin, All Creatures, 1894 Ohio Pike, Amelia, OH 45102, 513-797-7387.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card carrying members of the GCHS at Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic, 5989 Meijer Dr., Suite 2, Milford, Ohio 513-576-0131

(Number to left of decimal indicates males; number to right of decimal indicates females; number to right of second decimal indicates number of unknown sex. For example, 3.2.1=3 males, 2 females, and 1 unsexed specimen)

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Currently Held Positions

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
		(513) 564-6041	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452			(513) 564-6041
Sergeant-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452	Education Committee Chairman		
Advisor	Vacant		Peggy Fille		(513) 528-4452
Secretary	Kyle Becker	(513) 831-4898			

About the GCHS

The Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society holds monthly meetings which typically consist of a short business section, a refreshment intermission, and a program related to herpetology. Both members and nonmembers are invited to attend. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in reptiles and amphibians. New members may sign up by mail or at the monthly meetings. Members receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue* and free classified advertising. Annual dues should be directed to the secretary at the society's mailing address, according to the rates below:

Student	\$10.00	Corresponding	
	\$10.00		
Individual	\$15.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$20.00	Institutional	\$30.00
Contributing	\$50.00		

Why Be a Member?

Receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue*

§Meet individuals knowledgeable about herpetoculture

§Have access to captive-bred herps and feeder animals

§Participate in society-sponsored field trips, and outings.

§Receive a 10 percent discount on herp-related items and services when you show a valid membership card at the following establishments:

Delhi Pet Center (513) 451-4015

Kentucky Reptile Zoo (606) 663-9160

Harrison Pet Center (513) 367-1115

All Creatures Animal Hospital (513) 797-7387

Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic (513) 576-0131.

P.O. Box 14783
Cincinnati, OH 45250

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